

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-33 (Canceled).

34(New). Sliding bearing element comprising a backing made of steel, said backing being lined with a bearing material and a soft material, wherein the bearing material is capable of sustaining a bearing load and the soft material has anti-seizure properties, said bearing material being bonded to the backing and disposed at least at edges of the backing in the form of wires extending in a circumferential direction, and where the soft material is located at least in a space between said wires.

35(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34 wherein the soft material covers the wires in order to form a sliding surface by itself.

36(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 35, wherein the soft material extends above the wires by a thickness of <30 μ m.

37(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 36, wherein the thickness of the soft material extending above the wires is <5 μ m.

38(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein a sliding surface of the bearing element is formed by the wires and the soft material.

39(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein at least one intermediate wire is bonded to the backing between two edge wires generally running in a circumferential direction.

40(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 39, wherein the intermediate wire generally runs in the circumferential direction and in addition oscillates in the axial direction of the sliding bearing element.

41(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 40, wherein the oscillation of the intermediate wire is regular.

42(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 41, wherein the oscillating intermediate wire has the shape of a wave.

43(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 29, wherein the edge wires and/or the intermediate wire have a circular cross-section.

44(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 43, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have the same diameter.

45(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 43, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 100 and 500 μm .

46(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 43, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 200 and 400 μm .

47(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 43, wherein the edge wires and the intermediate wire have a diameter of between 250 and 350 μm .

48(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the bearing alloy is a copper alloy.

49(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 48, wherein the copper alloy is a copper-tin alloy in which the tin content of the copper alloy is less than 12% by weight and more than 4% by weight.

50(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 49, wherein the copper alloy comprises a copper-tin-phosphorus alloy in which the phosphorus content of the copper alloy is less than 1.0% by weight and greater than 0.01% by weight.

51(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the backing is coated with either copper or nickel.

52(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the soft material is either a metal or a metal alloy.

53(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 52, wherein the soft material is tin-based.

54(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 52, wherein the soft material is bismuth-based.

55(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 34, wherein the soft material is a polymer based composition.

56(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55 wherein the polymer based composition is based on polyphenylene sulphide, polyphenylene sulphone, polyetherether ketone, polyamide imide or polyaromatic polyester.

57(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55, wherein the polymer based composition incorporates an organic solid lubricant.

58(New). Sliding bearing element according to claim 55, wherein the polymer based composition incorporates an inorganic solid lubricant.

59(New). Method for producing a sliding bearing element, comprising:

- providing a backing strip,
- bonding at least one wire at each of two edges of the backing strip such that the wires run in a generally circumferential direction of the backing strip and form spaces between the wires; and
- filling the spaces between the wires with a relatively soft material.

60(New). Method according to claim 59, wherein the wires are bonded to the backing by sintering.

61(New). Method according to claim 60, wherein the sintering process for bonding the wires include the following steps:

- continuously feeding the backing strip through an induction coil in which the strip is heated in a non oxidizing atmosphere to a temperature at which sintering takes place; and
- dispensing the wires onto a surface of the strip within the induction coil such that the wires contact the strip surface as the strip reaches sintering temperature.

62(New). Method according to claim 61, including:

- dispensing at least one intermediate wire from at least one associated dispenser reciprocating at right angles to the strip.

63(New). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filing of the spaces between the wires carried out by casting or by rolling at elevated temperature.

64(New). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer based composition in tape form by extrusion and rolling the tape at a temperature corresponding to its softening point in the spaces.

65(New). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer composition in paste form by means of an organic solvent and rolling the paste into the spaces and subsequently heat treating to remove the solvent and consolidate the polymer composition.

66(New). Method according to claim 59, wherein:

- the filling of the spaces between the wires with the soft material is carried out by producing a polymer composition as a powder or a blend of powders,

- spreading the powder or powder blend onto the strip in such a way as to fill the spaces between the wires, and

- consolidating the powder or powder blend by heat treating or heating and rolling.